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REMARKS

Claims 1-16 are in the case with claims 1-8 being withdrawn from consideration as of the date of this amendment. No claims have been allowed.

The disclosure is objected to because it contains an embedded hyperlink and because the materials disclosed at the hyperlink have been incorporated by reference. Accordingly, Applicant has deleted the corresponding sentence in the instant application. It is respectfully submitted that this reference merely taught a process that is already well known in the art so that Applicant's specification still discloses its invention sufficiently so that one of ordinary skill in the art can make and use the invention.

Claim 13 is rejected for improperly depending from claim 9. Applicant apologizes for this typographical error and, by way of the instant amendment, has corrected claim 13 to depend from claim 10.

Claims 9-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Woodall et al. (2002/0182962).

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Woodall et al. (2002/0182962) appear to teach a moisture-absorbing cellulose-based material. Processing of the fibrous cellulosic material involves the steps of drying, aligning, stretching, and then compressing the material. See paragraphs 20-25 and 35.

In contrast, the present invention is a method of making a moisture-absorbing material that expands linearly upon moisture

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absorption. A natural cellulosic material that is defined by hollow fibrous tubes is first dried. The material is then combed in a direction to substantially longitudinally align the hollow fibrous tubes. The material is then stretched so that the hollow fibrous tubes are stretched substantially in the same direction with the hollow fibrous tubes being placed in a stretched state. The hollow fibrous tubes in their stretched state are twisted substantially about the same direction, and then compressed in the same direction so that a dried-in strain of the natural cellulosic material is greatest along the same direction. In this way, the hollow fibrous tubes expand along the same direction when exposed to moisture. Support for the amended claim language can be found in Applicant's originally-filed specification at page 6, lines 11-18, and at page 7, lines 5-10. Similar amendments have been made to Applicant's independent claim 14.

None of the prior art cited by the Examiner appears to teach or even suggest the unique combination taught by Applicant. Woodall et al. (2002/0182962) does not teach or even suggest the step of twisting the hollow fibrous tubes in their stretched state about the direction of the stretching force. This additional processing step was found to make the material expand in a predictable and linear fashion when exposed to moisture (e.g., water) without requiring any additional apparatus to control such linear expansion. More specifically, tests of the material processed in accordance with the claimed method showed that the material would expand in this predictable and linear fashion even

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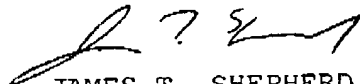
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when the material was not contained in a tube or constrained in any way to control such linear expansion. Accordingly, the material can have its entire surface area exposed which allows the expansion operation to proceed more quickly than if the material had to be contained/constrained to control the moisture-absorbing expansion thereof. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that claims 9-14 are not anticipated or suggested by the teachings of Woodall et al. (2002/0182962).

In view of all the art of record, the claims remaining in the case are considered to patentably distinguish thereover.

It is submitted in view of these remarks that all grounds for rejection have been removed by the foregoing amendment. For the hereinabove reasons, Applicant solicits an early and favorable response.

Respectfully submitted,



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